

MALTESE E-NEWSLETTER

The journal of the Maltese Diaspora

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Christmas Edition

Dedicated to all Maltese living all over the world

Maltese Effigies of Baby Jesus



Joseph C Camilleri BA; DEAM; M.Ed (PI & Mgt)

In Malta, during Christmas time, you can meet effigies of Baby Jesus or the Infant Jesus, wherever you go. People include the figure of Baby Jesus in their annual Christmas home decorations. These effigies are either placed on a *gradenza* (chest of drawers) or a side table together with home-grown vetch pots, red and yellow candles and electric lamps. If the effigies are made in wax, they are placed under glass domes locally known as *bozza*. Other effigies are made in clay, *papier mache* (*kartapesta*), plaster and plastic. Some people

exhibit their effigies in windows so that they can be admired by the passers-by. Some believe that this tradition is a public manifestation of their appreciation of Jesus' salvation of mankind. These effigies are lit, during the night, by white small bulbs.

In parish and conventual churches, their Baby Jesus effigies are placed on side altars or on a side tables/cupboards which are placed next to the High Altars. Usually, these effigies are covered with a yellow damask cloth until the beginning of the Christmas Eve Mid-night celebrations. Before the Mid-night Mass, the sextons carry these effigies to the churches' sacristies to be carried at the beginning of the Mid-night mass by the parish priest or head of the monastery. A new tradition is being developing in Maltese Islands involving these effigies. Nowadays these effigies are not being placed on side-altars but exhibited in Holy Eucharist stands which are placed on the High Altars. This tradition is believed to have started in Gozo and it is slowly spreading in Gozo's sister island - Malta.

In some churches, there is the tradition of replacing the small Baby Jesus figure by larger Jesus figures. These effigies are changed usually on the eve of the New Year. These large effigy carrying symbols. Sometimes the Infant Jesus is made to carrying a globe. These types of figures are referred to as *Salvatore Mundi*. There are other figures which carry small crosses. These figures are referred to as *Bambin Redentur*. These large effigies are also placed on the High Altar until the feast of the Epiphany. After the liturgical feast of the Adoration of the Magi, these effigies are taken away to the sacristies where they are dusted and placed in a safe place ready to be used the year after.

THE POPULARITY OF THE INFANT JESUS EFFIGIES - In the beginning of the 20th century, members of the Society of Christian Doctrine (M.U.E.U.M.) known as *is-soċċi tal-Mużew*, started producing thousands and thousands of small wax Baby Jesus effigies to be distributed, as Christmas gifts, to children who attended the various doctrine centres (*oqsma*) religion lessons. Moreover, there was a local custom involving these effigies. Parents of a future bride use to include in the dowry an effigy of baby Jesus. These effigies were not the only religious items which were included in the list of items meant for a dowry. There were also some religious large holy pictures, which were framed and hung in the main bedroom. The most popular picture was that of the Holy Family.

Gozo has another tradition involving these figures of Baby Jesus. In the house's hall (*intrata*), they usually placed a *gradenza*. On this *gradenza* they placed a wax effigy of Baby Jesus in a glass dome, which was exhibited during the whole calendar year. Next to this dome, they placed two highly decorated vases with artificial flowers which were usually made of *gratunell* (typical artificial flowers made by thread). These tradition was also popular in some areas in Malta, especially in the Cottonera area (*Bormla, l-Isla and Birgu*).

In some families, at the beginning of Advent, they use to lit a small candle in front of this effigy. On the last Sunday of Advent, the glass dome was taken away and the effigy was decorated with home-grown vetch on small plates. Usually a candle used to be lit during the dark hours of the day.

In Gozo, the families used to gather together in front of these small effigies or in front of the cribs to say some prayers or sing some folklore songs linked with the birth of Christ. In some families, the Joyous Mysteries of the Rosary were recited, in front of these effigies.

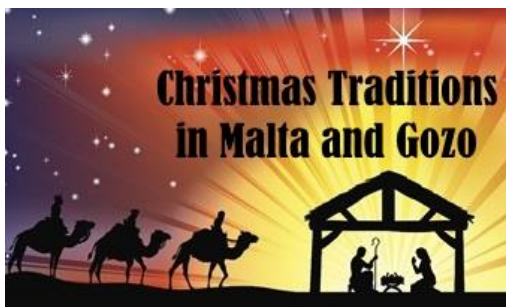
Finally in the countryside, there was a custom to place these effigies in a prominent place in the home on the Christmas Eve. They were left there for until the day after Christmas. This custom gave 'birth' to a local expression – *Mill-Milled sa San Stefnu* (From Christmas Day to Saint Stephen's Day). This expression is used to refer to a very short period of time.

Malta's largest figure of Baby Jesus is found on the High Altar of the Church of Jesus, locally known as the Jesuits church (*il-knisja tal-Ġżwiti*) at Valletta. This figure is made of Malta stone and it is larger than a normal person. This effigy is a reminder of the Jesuits' pastoral work when they were involved in the spread of the Baby Jesus cult. The parish church of Ġharghur façade includes an image of the Baby Jesus. This is the only church which is decorated with this type of effigy.

A tradition, which is carried out in most of the towns and villages in Malta and Gozo involving effigies of Baby Jesus is the Christmas Eve manifestation. This activity is organised by members of the Society of Christian Doctrine (*tal-Mużew*). An effigy of Baby Jesus is carried shoulder high by a group of four young gentlemen throughout the streets during Christmas Eve evening. This effigy is accompanied by group of boys who attend the doctrine centre as well as by the Society's members. While they pass the streets to reach the church, where a religious function is organised, they sing Christmas carols usually in Maltese.

THE MALTA POST - In 2004 issued a set of Christmas stamps featuring four *Bambini*. This set was designed by Richard J. Caruana. The first stamp featured a papier mache *Bambin*. This effigy was made in the Italian town of Lecce. This *Bambin* is kept in the Paul Pace Baby Jesus collection. The second stamp features a wax *Bambin* under a glass dome. This effigy was decorated by a Benedictine nun of Mdina. This used to belong to a Balzan family - Ebejer. The third effigy shows a *Bambin*, made of wax, made by member of the Buttigieg dynasty of Baby Jesus effigies producers. This also belongs to the Paul Pace Collection. The highest value depicts an effigy probably made in France. This Baby Jesus figure belongs to the Paul Pace Collection. These stamps were issued on the 10th November, 2004.

In 2017, Maltapost issued another set of 4 Christmas stamps depicting effigies of Baby Jesus. The lowest value shows the Nativity of the Virgin Mary church's (Naxxar) effigy. The next value shows the Immaculate Conception church's (Bormla/Cospicua) effigy. On the third value, there is the St Peter and St Paul church's effigy while the highest value shows the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Grace's (Zabbar) effigy. These stamps were issued on the 17th November, 2017.



CHRISTMAS CUSTOMS – a boy or a girl preaching the sermon at midnight mass

The Christmas crib "*Il-Presejju*" features practically everywhere during the holiday season. Some churches put up cribs which are virtually works of art. Cribs are in fact one of the most popular Christmas traditions in Malta and Gozo. Many Maltese people decorate their windows with little Christmas displays which include small statues of baby Jesus in a crib, elaborate cribs and sometimes impressive light decorations and a Christmas tree. Crib building in Malta is said to have initiated in the first half of the 17th century, mostly created by monks and introduced by Italian nobleman.



In Mdina, the old capital city of Malta, the crib is displayed at St Peter's Monastery which dates to 1670. The best crib displays are in Xaghra and Zejtun. In various villages in Malta and Gozo there are Christmas crib enthusiasts who open their houses to invite people to view their Christmas nativity set complete with landscape and scenery and made with painstaking dedication over many months and may be

years. The climax of all the religious activities comes on Christmas Eve, when practically everyone goes to the Midnight Mass Service. Maltese Christmas carols are sung in the beginning and an interesting highlight is when a little boy or a girl tells the story of the nativity in the form of a sermon.



The child is usually between 7 to 10 years old. Of course, the smaller the child is, the greater difficulty he or she has in learning the sermon by heart! Usually it takes the child some 5 weeks to learn it all. The boy or girl stands in front of the main altar and tells the story of baby Jesus, adding that personal touch to the story which invariably touches the hearts of all present.

Christmas Day in Malta is largely a family affair and is a special occasion for families to reunite. It's part of the Maltese culture and tradition for all extended members of the family to assemble in one house for Christmas lunch and practically spend the whole day together, eating, drinking and celebrating Christmas.

At school, children are taught how to make "*gulbiena*" which is prepared by sowing wheat, grain and canary seed on cotton buds a few weeks before Christmas. The buds are left in the dark until the seeds grown into white grass-like shoots. They are then used as a decoration for the Christmas cribs or placed near statues of Baby Jesus.

The Maltese Christmas menu consists generally of dishes that were inherited during the British rule in Malta. So, for lunch, you will most likely see things like turkey, Christmas pudding and mince pies being served, together with other traditional Maltese food.

A local Christmas dessert is the '*Qaghaq ta' l-Ghasel*', which means honey rings. This is something that you have to try if you're spending Christmas in Malta.

Due to the proximity of Italy, the traditional Italian Christmas favourite, the "*panetone*" (sweet bread often covered in chocolate) has also become very popular over recent years. Like most countries, Christmas on the Maltese Islands is a busy time, but it's also a time to spend good quality time with family and friends.

MALTESE-AMERICAN SOCIAL CLUB OF SAN FRANCISCO USA

Meeting Location: 924 El Camino Real South San Francisco, CA 94080 (Main Hall)

Club Committees 2017

WOMEN'S SOCIAL COMMITTEE - Chairpersons: Ninfa Pace and Jane Healey - At the November meeting, the women enjoyed a movie and an ice cream social. There will be an exchange of gifts at their December 12th meeting. Meetings are held on the second Tuesday of the month, starting at 6:30 p.m.



Healey, Marlene Ebejer and Rose Vassallo

ENTERTAINMENT COMMITTEE - Our Bowling night was a success with double the amount of people than the 1st one. The Graton Casino Trip was a lot of fun for everyone. The Children's Christmas Party is on December 16th and our last function for 2017 is the New Year's Eve Dinner Dance.

KNITTING GROUP - Marlene Ebejer - **Our Group meets every Thursday at 6:30pm.** Like to knit? So do we! Whether a pro or a beginner, you can bring your talent into fruition and socialize as well. The knitting group has made many, wonderful handmade items this year and were donated to various charities. Photo from Left to Right: Sylvia Pignati, Mary Vella, Rose Mizzi, Mary Healey, Jane

We wish you all a very merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year 2018.



MESSAGE TA' L-ISPEAKER TAL-KAMRA TAL-PARLAMENT MALTI

ONOR ANGLU FARRUGIA LL.D

: Huwa ta' pjaċir kbir tiegħi bħala President tal-Parlament Malti, l-oġġla istituzzjoni tal-pajjiż, li nagħti l-messaġġ tiegħi lill-Maltin kollha ta' barra. Jien dejjem emmint ħafna fl-identità ta' pajjiżna għaliex din hija aħna; aħna, inkunu fejn inkunu, bil-valuri tagħna, bil-kultura tagħna u bl-istorja tagħna, li nagħtu l-identità kull fejn inkunu. U nagħtu l-identità tagħna bħala Maltin mhux biss għaliex l-orijini tagħna hija Malta, anke

min hu 'l bogħod, imma minħabba l-valur bħala Malti, ikun fejn ikun. Dan huwa valur addizzjonali għal fejn inkunu. Fil-fatt meta wieħed jistudja d-dijaspora tal-Maltin isib li dawn dejjem kienu ta' kontribut mill-aqwa, kienu fejn kienu. Pereżempju, jien għadni ġej minn konferenza fi Buenos Aires, l-Argentina, li fiha rrappreżentajt il-Commonwealth. Hemmhekk kelli x-xorti li mmur fit-triq ewlenija fiċ-ċentru ta' Buenos Aires imsemmija għal wieħed Malti. Dan huwa Juan Azopardo li kien l-ewwel ammirall tan-Navy tal-Argentina. Dan qed ngħidu mhux għaliex dan ħalla marka kbira ta' pajjiżna barra minn Malta imma għaliex dawn l-affarijiet ma sarux fl-Argentina biss. Pereżempju fl-Awstralja l-maġġoranza tal-Maltin kollha li marru hemmhekk kollha taw kontribut lis-soċjetà Awstraljana u dejjem żammew ħaj il-valur tal-familja Maltija.

Jien inħossni kburi aktar għaliex tajt kontribut lid-dijaspora Maltija u nibqa' nagħti kontribut. Pereżempju jien l-ewwel Speaker fl-istorja ta' Malta li ħassejt li għandi niftaħ l-orizzont kollu tal-Parlament għall-iskrutinju tal-Maltin ta' barra. Illum il-Maltin ta' barra jistgħu jsegwu l-Parlament b'mod dirett minn fuq l-internet u l-Maltin jistgħu jsegwuh dirett minn fuq it-televiżjoni. Barra minn hekk wieħed jista' jaqsam dak kollu li jkun qed isir billi jagħmel kumment dirett anke fuq l-internet mal-Parlament Malti. Hemm ħafna aktar affarijiet x'nagħmlu.

Hemm kumitat apposta tal-affarijiet barranin fejn wieħed jista' – permezz tar-rappreżentanti tiegħu fil-Kunsill Malti – jagħmel ir-rappreżentazzjonijiet tiegħu f'dak li għandu x'jaqsam mad-drittijiet tal-Maltin ta' barra. Hemm aktar xi jsir. Jien bħala Speaker elett fil-Commonwealth li nrrappreżenta lill-pajjiżi żgħar u lil dawk il-postijiet li għandhom popolazzjoni ta' inqas minn 500,000 ruħ ikolli x-xorti li nżur ukoll l-Awstralja. Fil-fatt dan l-aħħar kont qiegħed Darwin, in-Northern Territory, fejn hemm popolazzjoni ta' madwar 250,000 u kelli x-xorti li nikkontribwixxi u niltaqa' ma' Maltin f'dawk l-inħawi. Jien inħossni kburi li kemm indum President tal-Kamra nista' nagħti aktar kontribut lill-Maltin ta' barra.

Jien messaġġ wieħed irrid nagħmel. Kompli aħdmu flimkien, kompli żommu l-valuri Maltin u lit-tfal tagħkom u lit-tfal tat-tfal tagħkom għallmuhom li storikament pajjiżna dejjem kien minn ta' quddiem biex jagħti kontribut mhux lill-Mediterran biss imma lid-dinja kollha. Dan l-aħħar fil-Parlament Malti kkommemorajna l-50 sena minn mindu fil-Ġnus Magħquda kien hemm id-diskors tal-Ambaxxatur Malti Arvid Pardo li ħareġ bl-idea tal-liġi dwar il-baħar li illum hija liġi tad-dritt internazzjonali.

Dan huwa kollu kontribut tal-Maltin fil-governanza dinjija. Jien insellem lill-Maltin kollha, nagħtikom il-Milied ħieni u nawguralkom sena mimlija risq u hena.



Christmas Message by Archbishop Charles J. Scicluna

The Four Gospels that are proclaimed during the Liturgy through the twenty-four hours of the Solemnity of the Nativity of Our Lord, indicate an itinerary, a journey that took place along the years but that also occurs in the life of each and every one of us.



On Christmas Eve, the Gospel according to Matthew presents us with Jesus' family tree, that sheds light on the historical and legal context of his birth. In this narrative we find a variety of people: men and women, of good standing or not, good and bad, Jews and Gentiles, kings, prophets, priests and people with low-level professions. Jesus was born for everyone and no one is excluded from the joy of his birth and the hope that he brings. He is the Immanu-El,

'God with us'; God with everyone and not with just a few.

The narrative of Saint Luke is proclaimed during the Midnight Mass where we hear about the civil, legal, and social background of Christ's birth. It seems that Luke is acknowledging that amid the confusion and great tension reigning in the country at the time, the simplicity of the Son of God can be found swaddled in cloths, in the stillness of the night and lying in the silence of the manger. What was promised, came to pass. "Do not be afraid!", is God's message to us. The courage of all humanity is hidden in an infant.

On Christmas Morning, we observe the reaction of the shepherds who hurried to the manger and saw that everything was just as they had been told. What was announced, came to pass. However, the shepherds rose and walked in order to see, they did not walk slowly; there was a certain urgency in their motion. When the Good News is proclaimed it does give joy but it cannot be perceived if whoever hears it remains immobile. The shepherds rose and walked. If we get lazy and drag our feet, praise and joy become futile.

At Mass on Christmas day, we are presented with a reflection of what came to pass. In Jesus, John the Evangelist sees the Promised Messiah. God kept his promise, as always. Then again, even those who feel joyful at Christ's nativity can still carry on with their daily routine as if nothing happened. Christ's birth means a great deal for us, and may the graces upon graces we have received, be for us a light, albeit lukewarm but strong, that shows us where we are and the road we must take, so that our joy will be complete.

I extend my greetings in a special way to my fellow Maltese and Gozitan brothers and sisters living outside these shores, the emigrants in Australia, their families that have now extended to the third and fourth generations. The Maltese presence in the world is a beautiful thing to behold; especially when generations, even recent ones, recall the stories about Christmas in Malta narrated by their grandparents and great grandparents. I know that many of you come to Malta and enjoy exploring and learning about your roots. Part of these beautiful roots of Malta is the Christian faith, for the celebration of our Christmas is centred on the Christ event.

My wish is that we are joyful with the birth of Baby Jesus. After all, the angels told the shepherds of Bethlehem: "Glory to God in the highest heaven...we bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people". This is my wish for you: that Christmas will be an experience of great joy.

Have a Blessed Christmas.

✠ **Charles Jude Scicluna** Archbishop of Malta





Christmas Messages



*Message by H.E. Mr. Charles Muscat
High Commissioner for Malta to Australia*



2017 started with Malta holding the EU Presidency with great pride and success. The High Commission in Canberra, Consuls General in Sydney and Melbourne, and the Honorary Consuls in Australia and New Zealand kept our flag flying high promoting Malta while continuing with our daily duties.

The pilot project, Consul on the Move (COTM) is currently proving to be a success in South Australia. The cooperation of our Honorary Consul in S.A., Mr. Frank Scicluna is very much appreciated.

This year proved to be a very busy one for the Malta High Commission in Canberra, including our Consuls General in Sydney & Melbourne, where we issued a good number of passports and processed quite a number of citizenship applications and other consular services.

This year, I also paid an official visit to Perth, W.A. The Honorary Consul Mr. Paul Calleja accompanied me to all of my official appointments. We visited and met with Monsignor Michael Keating at St. Mary's Cathedral and called on the Governor, Lord Mayor, Chief Justice, the Premier and Deputy, Leader of the Opposition and other State government officials. Hopefully I will be able to do the same in South Australia in the near future.

On behalf of myself, my wife, Victoria, my Deputy and staff at the High Commission in Canberra, the Consuls General and staff in Sydney and Melbourne, and all of our Honorary Consuls in Australia and New Zealand, I wish you all a blessed Christmas and a Peaceful and Prosperous 2018.



*Charles Muscat
High Commissioner for Malta
Canberra, Australia*

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MONS ALFRED VELLA **Malta Emigrants Commission**



Gheżież Maltin ħutna,

Nieħdu gost li minn żnien għall-żmien nikkomonikaw u ngħidu kelma tal-ħbieb lil xulxin.

Dan l-istaġun tal-Milied u s-sena l-għdida hu opportunita' biex nagħmlu hekk. F'dan iż-żmien mhux biss irridu naqsmu x-xewqat ta' dawn iż-żminijiet imma wkoll inheggu lil xulxin ħalli nibqgħu għaddejjin fil-ħajja ta' kuljum.

Aktar ma jmur aktar id-dinja tagħna qiegħda tidhol f'xibka ta' komunikazzjoni biex hekk noqorbu lejn xulxin. Imma nistqasu fir-ruħ ta' ruħna, veru qegħdin niksbu dan ir-riżultat? Il-bnedmin tassew qegħdin joqorbu lejn xulxin? Qegħdin inkunu nafu ħafna fuq xulxin imma mhux bilfors insiru aktar qrib ta' xulxin. Bil-mezzi tal-komunikazzjoni nistgħu nidhlu aktar fid-djar u fil-privatezza ta' xulxin imma kemm qegħdin inkunu ta' għajjnuna għal xulxin? Dawn huma kollha domandi li joħorġu mir-rejalta' tal-ħajja li qegħdin ngħixu. Grazzi Mulej li tgħani lill-bniedem b'tant intelligenza li skopra dawn il-mezzi ta' komunikazzjoni li kull ma jmur dejjem qegħdin aktar jizviluppaw, imma nitolbuk li tati lill-bniedem li jagħmel l-aħajr użu ta' dawn il-mezzi ta' komunikazzjoni. Aħna nafu kif inti ridt tikkomunika magħna, billi sirt wieħed minna, "bħalna f'kollox, barra mid-dnub", kif jgħidilna San Pawl, f'waħda mill-ittri tiegħu. Inti mhux biss għedtilna xi ħaġa imma ġejt biex tkun disponibbli għalina, "Ejjew għandi intom ilkoll li tinsabu imħabtin u imtaqlin u jien inserraħkom, ħudu fuqkom il-madmad tiegħi, għax jiena ta' qalb ħelwa u umli". Inti hekk tirraġuna magħna, u aħna hekk nixtiequ nirraġunaw bejnietna li nkunu disponibbli u preżenti fil-ħajja ta' xulxin.

It-talba tagħna flimkien hi, 'Mulej aghħlimna nkunu għal xulxin bħal ma inti ridt u inti għalina'. Dejjem inti disponibbli, qatt ma taqta' qalbek minna, u tibqa' tiġri warajna. Inti l-'Emanuel', "Alla magħna". Nistedinkom biex nagħddu dawn ix-xewqat lil xulxin. Ma nintilfux f'dawn iż-żminijiet fl-ikel, x-xorb u r-rigali u ninsew dak li hu l-aktar importanti, li niġġeddu fl-impenn tagħna għal xulxin u fl-imħabba lejn xulxin.

Nixtieqilkom kull saħħa u barka fil-Mulej u Milied hieni u sena mimlija barka t'Alla u fil-preżenza ta' Alla. Meta tkunu Malta nieħdu gost li narawkom u li intom taslu wasla sal-Mużew tal-emigrazzjoni li jiġbor fih din l-isorja tal-emigrazzjoni li intom parti minnha. Dawn l-awguri u stedina qiegħed nagħmilhomkom f'isem l-istess Kummissjoni Emigranti u Mons Philip Calleja, illum President ta' l-istess Kummissjoni u li għadu jagħti s-sehem tiegħu kuljum. Mons. Dun Alfred Vella, Direttur tal-Kummissjoni Emigranti.



CHEV CHARLES FARRUGIA – PRESIDENT – MALTESE GUILD OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

On behalf of the committee of the Maltese Guild I would like to wish all the members of our association and all the readers of the Maltese e-Newsletter a happy and holy Christmas and a safe, healthy and prosperous new year 2018. I take this opportunity to thank the volunteers who work so hard to see our society progress and prosper. It is important that we unite, work together and cooperate with each other. IL-MILIED IT-TAJJEN U MILIED HIENI.



MALTESE LITERARY GROUP – VICTORIA

Jiena, Paul Vella, flimkien ma' marti Salvina, f'isem il-Grupp Letteratura Maltija tal-Victoria, Reskeon Maltese Association Seniors Group u Grupp Xandara Maltin ta' 3ZZZ, il-kumitati u l-membri kollha tagħhom, nixtieq lilek, il-familja tiegħek u l-qarrejja kollha, Milied hieni u qaddis u Sena Għdida mimlija hena, risq, barka u saħħa.



LINA BROCKDORFF – MALTA

L-ewwelnett ngħati prosi lill-editur ta' da nil-gurnal li jservi ta' holqa bejn il-Maltin ta' Malta u ta' barra. Nixtieq din l-opportunita' biex nselli għall-ħutna Maltin li jinsabu barra minn xtutna u nixtieq lilhom u l-familja u l-ħbieb tagħhom Milied mill-isbah u sena għdida mimlija saħħa, hena u barka tal-Mulej.



SISTER MARY BORG- SISTERS OF THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS - ISRAEL

I wish you and all your family a very Holy Christmas and A Prosperous New Year.



AGNES & RON BORG – AUSTRALIA

We would like to wish all our dear friends and their families in the Maltese community, a Happy and Holy Christmas, and a New Year filled with Peace, Health, and Contentment. May God bless us with a year of United Peace in our Community. Our best wishes to you and Josie, and thank you for your fervent work..



MESSAĠĠ MILL-KAPPILLAN TAL-KOMMUNITÀ MALTIJA FIS-SOUTH AUSTRALIA – P.GABRIEL S. MICALLEF O.F.M.



Fil-Kalendarju li ta' kull sena nistampa bl-attivitajiet ta' l-Għaqdiet Maltin fis-South Australiastampajt dan ir-ritratt. Dan ir-ritratt gie meħud fis-sena 2000 meta organiżżajt Pellegrinaġġ għat-Terra Santau nġhaqadna ma grupp ieħor minn Malta.

Dan ir-ritratt meħud fil-grotta fejn jien qiegħed nippreżenta lil-Bambin Ġesù għal qima ta' dawk li kienu preżenti. L-istess haġa nixtieq nagħmel din is-sena lilkom kollha - kemm Maltin fis-South Australia anke lilkom qarreja tal-Maltese e-Newsletter.

Nixtieq u nawgura li Ġesù Tarbija jiġi jgħammar fikom, fi djarkom, fil-familji tagħkom u fil-membri kollha ta' l-għaqdiet tagħna hawn fi-S.A. Ġesù, l-Iben t'Alla umilja ruħu u sar bniedem bħalna. Jalla din il-virtù ta' l-umiltà tgħammar fina ilkoll għax b'hekk biss nistgħu nħallu l-paċi, l-għaqda u l-ftehim jgħammru fina u bejnietna lkoll. Jalla jkollna Milied Hieni u Sena Ġdida mimlija risq u hena ħalli flimkien nkunu nistgħu naħdmu għalenija u nkunu HOLOQA li tiġmagħna bħala aħwa u fl-istess ħin nagħmlu unur lilna Maltin u nħossuna kburin nkunu fejn inkunu.



FATHER NORBERT BONA VIA mssp

Thank you Mr. Frank for inviting me to send you a message for the Chis mass issue. First of all I want to congratulate you for the interesting items you give us month after a month. Something that I do appreciate a lot because I can imagine the work that it involves. Secondly, I do appreciate also very much, when opportunity occurs you mention our Fathers, the MSSP Fathers. Especially something of the early years when our Fathers came to Australia. Not only, but I notice that you are keen to publish other news about the work and formation of our students. Thank you again and a BIG CONGRATULATION

MALTESE-AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION FOUNDED 1971.



Mrs Joyce Nagy President Ms Antoinette Mascari Secretary
On behalf of all of our members, families and friends, we would like to thank the Editor of the 'Journal of the Maltese Diaspora' Mr Frank Scicluna for the wonderful journal which is of great interest to us all. We enjoy rekindling our nostalgia and reminisce with our families all the memories which we read about in this very informative and educational journal which we pass on to our fillies to read. On behalf of everyone, we send you and your family our best wishes for a HAPPY CHRISTMAS, may the birth of the Lord Jesus grant you his blessings upon your family. Wishing you, a prosperous and healthy NEW YEAR 2018. We would like you to extend our wishes to all the Maltese of the greater Malta where ever they reside. Awguri lill-Maltin kollha mad-dwar id-dinja. Antoinette Mascari H Sec.



CHARLES N MIFSUD – PRESIDENT -MALTESE CULTURAL ASSOCIATION OF NSW INC.

The Maltese Cultural Association of N.S.W.inc. it's Management Committee & Members wish You & Your Family & all the readers of this Magazine a Very Holy & Happy Christmas filled with Peace & Love & May 2018 be a Year of Prosperity & God's Blessings on us All..



MALTESE COMMUNITY COUNCIL OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA INC.

The Christmas season is upon us once again, a time to share the Christmas spirit with neighbours and friends and especially with those less fortunate in our community. A time to spend quality time with our families as we live in a busy fast-moving world and don't have much time during the year due to other civic or community commitments. On behalf of the Maltese Community Council of South Australia and from my family to yours

I wish all the Maltese Community Associations, leaders and members a blessed Christmas and a Happy New Year 2018, filled with good health and prosperity, working together for the community we love. .
Edgar Agius OAM JP. President



SENIOR CITIZENS ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Firstly I would like to congratulate you for your e-newsletter very informative (well done job) also thank you for your kind invitation.

On behalf of my Committee of the Maltese Senior Citizens of South Australia Incorporated I would like to wish a Merry Christmas and a peaceful and prosperous new year mostly to our Members and their families and Sponsors of the newsletter- The Bulletin. Also wishing the Maltese Community the peace and happiness that the miracle of Christmas brings. Frank Grima - President of the Maltese Senior Citizens SA



RICHARD CUMBO – CURATOR MALTESE-CANADIAN MUSEUM

"Dear Readers of this excellent publication by our compatriot the Hon. Consul Frank Scicluna, as we near the joyous occasion of the birth of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, on behalf of my volunteers, I extend to all Maltese around the globe a Happy and Blessed Christmas and a Healthy Year in 2018. Richard S. Cumbo, Curator, Maltese-Canadian Museum/Archives at St. Paul the Apostle Church, Toronto, Canada."



JOSEPHINE AND HARRY ZAMMIT CORDINA

"It is with great pleasure that together with my husband Harry and my son Henry and his wife Anna who always accompanied me in my various visits to Australia to film for my tv programme "Waltzing Matilda" together with Joe Montebello of Melbourne that I write to wish all the very best for Christmas and the New Year to all Maltese who for 18 years non stop featured in my programmes. May I also congratulate you Frank for your Maltese e-letter which we always look forward to. Our greetings for Christmas and the New Year to all your readers all over the world. Josephine Zammit Cordina, Hamrun, Malta."



MIRIAM BELLI - MELBOURNE

Xewqat sbieh u qaddisa f'dawn il-granet sbieh tal -Milied lilek u lil-qarrejja kollha tal-Maltese News Letter, ghax hija interessanti u ta tghalim ghalina li ahna imbeghdin min Malta taghna .Il-Milied it-Tajjeb. Miriam Belli. Melbourne.



ROSEMARY AND CHARLES ATTARD

Thank you for taking the time to produce the forthcoming " SPECIAL CHRISTMAS EDITION " of your Journal of the Maltese Diaspora.

I am sure that it will be full of special news that we the Maltese living abroad will be very pleased with. May we take this opportunity to thank you most sincerely for your effort during the year and congratulate you on a job well done. Extending to you, your family and all the friends that read your Journal "XEWQAT SBIEH GHAL MILIED HIENI U QADDIS U SENA GDIDA MIMLIJHA BARKA SAHHA HENA U RISQ" Rosemary & Charles Attard



PAUL CALLEJA – HON CONSUL FOR MALTA IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Nice to receive from you - congratulation on your fine Journal

On behalf of the western third of Australia I wish all readers of the Journal of the Maltese Diaspora the four virtues the birth of Jesus brings us - Hope, Love, Joy and Peace. I take this opportunity to remind readers of the grand performance of Handel's *Messiah* which will be performed on 12 January 2018 as a fund raiser for the Anglican pro Cathedral. The performance will feature a special appearance of the University of Western Australia Choral Society that includes Perth's own Dr Roger Vella Bonavita - the best wishes of Perth's Maltese community goes to them. Merry Christmas to you all
Paul Calleja - Malta Honorary Consul - Western Australia



JIM BORG – COORDINATOR - DAR TAL-PROVIDENZA – MALTA

Christmas Message - The Friends Of Providence House NSW, would like express our gratitude to all Sponsors and Donors.

Wishing all A Very Merry Christmas and a New Year full of Happiness, Good Health, Peace and Prosperity.
Jim Borg Co-Ordinator



FRANK FORMOSA- AUSTRALIA

Thank you and your team for this Maltese Newsletter. It is very informative and always make me feel home sick, even though I have been in Australia for 62 years. Regards and have a merry Christmas, Frank Formosa



HENRY BERRY - AUSTRALIA

Thank you Mr. F. Scicluna for inviting me to say a few words on your Special Christmas Edition. It is a great honour for me to do so on such a complete News Letter. First I want to thank you for the great work that you are doing, keeping us informed with a great journal. I enjoy reading it so much that I cannot wait for the Special Edition. As it is going to be A Christmas Edition I would like to take the opportunity to wish you, your loved ones and all the readers of the Maltese e-Newsletter A Merry Christmas and A Happy New Year. Take care every one so we can enjoy The Maltese e- Newsletter again next year together.

SAHHA GHAL KULHADD. Harry Berry



FRANCISCAN SISTERS OF THE HEART OF JESUS – AUSTRALIA

Today our Saviour is born; Let us Rejoice. “And so at the birth of our Lord the angels sing in joy Glory to God in the highest, and they proclaim peace to people of good will as they see the heavenly Jerusalem being built from all the nations of the world.” -Pope Saint Leo the Great

On behalf of the Franciscan Sisters of the Heart of Jesus in South Australia, NSW and Queensland, I send our best wishes through this journal to the Maltese Community around the world. May the love, joy and peace of the Christ Child be with you and your loved ones now and throughout the New Year 2018. May this Christmas be a reminder that the Saviour of the world was born in a lowly manger, for each of us, because of His great love for all mankind. **Sister Vittoriana DeBattista**



IRENE COOPER – QUEENSLAND - AUSTRALIA

I would like to send my Best wishes to all family, friends ,acquaintances and friends whom I have met along my journeys this year. Special Christmas and New year wishes are sent to my family in Qrendi and Lija in Malta. Kind warm hearted greetings are also extended to cousins in Canada and America . May the Christ Jesus cover you all with good Health, happiness and prosperity and above all grant you Peace of Mind and Heart. We may be miles away from each other but we are all united in the Spirit of Christmas.



DR. VICTOR CHIRCHOP-SULLIVAN - AUSTRALIA

Frank, May I wish you and your family and to all the readers of the Maltese E=Newsletter and Merry Christmas and a wonderful New Year.

Congrats to you and all your collaborators; it is heart-warming to see you still fly the flag with pride and gusto.



PROFS HENRY FREND – MALTA

My book MALTESE OVERSEAS SETTLEMENTS: SELECTED WRITINGS ON THE DIASPORA should be out from Midsea in 2018; this will include articles I had contributed to Lino Vella's *The Maltese Herald* as well as my encounters with Maltese in Cape Town, Izmir (Smyrna), Corfu, etc. Milied hieni u sena tajba lil kulhadd.



MARIA AND ARMANDO CATANIA – AUSTRALIA

I thank you publishing my poem and picture of Bishop Joe Grech on the Newsletter 197. Wishing you and all the readers of this journal a blessed Christmas and a wonderful New Year 2018.



TESSIE MANSUETO – PRESIDENT – ST.CATHERINE SOCIETY OF S.A.

It's that time of the year when all families get together and celebrate the birth of Baby Jesus. On behalf of the committee of St. Catherine Society I wish all our members and all the Maltese around the world a joyous Christmas and a happy new year 2018.



JOE, INES, STEPHANIE BEZZINA

Sent their best wishes to all the readers of the Maltese eNewsletter for Christmas and the New Year.

MESSAGE FROM EMANUEL CAMILLERI THE PRESIDENT OF THE

MALTESE COMMUNITY COUNCIL OF NSW



This time of the year the leaders in our society encourages us to enjoy the Christmas festive season

As the president of Maltese Community Council of NSW it is part of my duty to convey to all Maltese of this state a message of good will and prosperity.

The past year we have seen events worldwide that at time left us speechless. We have seen disasters, wars, the threat of nuclear conflict and some of us have experience family difficulties and tragedies, As Catholics we always leave the unknown in the hands of our lord, the same lord that gave us his son on that cold wintry Christmas day.

Today Christmas to us, though we celebrated in summer it is still a family affair, it is a time where we shear our good will and hospitality with family and friends and offer our prayers to those who are not as four tuned as us, we also pray for world peace On behalf of the MCC Committee I would like to wish you all a merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous new year. Emanuel Camilleri

Thanks, Frank thanks for all your support during the year, on behalf of the MCC and my family I wish you and your family the warmest Christmas Greetings and may you have a healthy new year.



HAPPY CHRISTMAS AND A PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR - CARMELO BORG



JOE DEGUARA

I wish all the Maltese in Australia and all the readers of the Maltese Newsletter a blessed and holy Christmas and a peaceful new Year



JANE GALEA – PRESIDENT – MONASH MALTESE SENIORS SOCIAL GROUP-VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA

On behalf of the Monash Maltese Seniors Social Group I like to wish and your family a Blessed Christmas and Prosperous New Year. Also, I would like to thank you for all those Maltese Newsletters you have sent us throughout this year, full of good news and old history. I also send them to my friends. Prosit.



FR.MANUEL PARNIS – ST. PAUL THE APOSTLE PARISH – TORONTO - CANADA

Hello Mr. Frank Scicluna, I wish you and all a very spiritually enriched Christmas to you and all the Maltese in Australia. We as Maltese have a very rich tradition of preparing well for Christmas by preparing the maxtura or crib with all the beautiful decorations in our houses, sharing gifts to so many friends and all, Christmas cards and blessings. We are so helpful with all our rich hospitality and love for everyone. That is our characteristic and we need to continue to build on what we have received from our ancestors so that that spirit of Christmas will be always felt among us and among those with whom we share our culture and customs. May Christ who has enriched us through so many Christian values keep on showering upon us graces upon graces so that we will always be his bridges and ambassadors of peace on earth.



CARMELO AND MIRIAM FARRUGIA – AUSTRALIA

We wish to all our friends and all the readers of this wonderful Newsletter, which is binding all the Maltese together, a very happy Christmas and a happy and safe New Year. Keep us the good work.



GREG CARUANA – GROUP OF THE FEAST OF SAINT MARY – SYDNEY

We of “THE GROUP OF THE FESRA TA SANTA MARIJA ta’ SYDNEY” wish all the Maltese wherever they are a Holy Christmas and a new year filled with peace and blessings. We would like to inform your readers that next year we are going to have with us for the feast of Saint Mary as special guest – Father Kalcidon Vassallo, parish priest of Mgarr.



CHRIS BORG – CB TRAVEL ADVENTURES – SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

Thank you for your support. I wish each everyone of your readers a great Christmas and a peaceful New Year 2018. cbtraveladventures@bigpond.com.au



From my family to you and yours,
I hope you have a wonderful Christmas.
Best wishes for a prosperous, positive new year.

**GREETINGS FROM JAY WETHERHILL –
PREMIER OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA**



**JOE CAMILLERI – PRESIDENT –
MALTESE QUEEN OF VICTORIES
BAND – SOUTH AUSTRALIA**

On behalf of the Maltese Queen of Victories Band we wish Father Gabriel Micallef, Chaplain to the Maltese in SA AND Mr. Frank Scicluna, our honorary Consul for Malta in SA and the Maltese community in SA a very Happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year. We would like to thank you for sending us your great Maltese journal

which we love to read. It is very much appreciated.

To Mr. Frank Scicluna - Hon Consul for Malta in South Australia

Dear Frank
Very warm greetings to you.
I hope 2017 has been a rewarding year for you and your community. Congratulations to the Maltese community for their wonderful contribution to South Australia. Thank you for your very hard work and strong commitment to serve the South Australian Maltese community. Wishing you, your family and all the members of the Maltese community a joyous festive season. May you enjoy peace, health, happiness and prosperity in the New Year 2018

Merry Christmas &
Happy New Year!



**LOUIS PARNIS – PRESIDENT – GEORGE
CROSS FALCONS COMMUNITY CENTRE –
WOLLONGONG - AUSTRALIA**

On behalf of the committee I wish all our members and guests a happy Christmas and a wonderful new year 2018. We look forward to another challenging but exciting year as we continue to strengthen our community in the Illawara South Coast.

**MARY AND HARRY BIGEJA – ADELAIDE –
AUSTRALIA**

To Frank and Josie and all my friends and relatives... wishing you a very happy and holy Christmas.

**CHARLIE AND MARGERET MIFSUD –
ADELAIDE AUSTRALIA .**

We like to thank you for sending us the Maltese newsletter during the year to keep in touch with our culture . Also we like to wish

you and your wife , a blessed Christmas , and a healthy , peaceful 2018 .

JOSEPH FARRUGIA – MALTA



I wish all the Maltese living abroad a sweet and peaceful Christmas and a wonderful New Year. We hope to see you during 2018 when Valletta will be the European Capital of Culture. We miss you all.

MARY AND CHARLIE SALIBA – ADELAIDE AUSTRALIA



Wishing you all a joyul and peaceful Christmas and may we have a prosperous New Year.



**Christmas Lunch of the
Maltese-Australian Association of
Canberra & Queanbeyan Inc.
Sunday 10th December 2017 at
Gold Creek Golf Club, Nicholls.**

About 60 members and their families attended our Christmas Lunch, this year organised at the Gold Creek Golf Club. The meal was a Buffet consisting of premium cold cuts of ham, beef, turkey, continental meats, selection of four salads, condiments, dinner rolls and butter.

For Desserts, there was a choice of Pavlova; Cheesecake or Chocolate Mud Cake. Tea

and coffee was available. Lemonade, Orange Juice and water was also provided.

The bar was opened for guests to buy beer, spirits or wine.

For the children, there was an option of Chicken Nuggets and Chips or Fish and Chips followed by Ice-cream.

The committee decorated the hall very nicely with a small Maltese Flag on each Table, Christmas tinsels and balloons throughout. Also present was a Maltese traditional Presepju and a nicely embroidered tapestry on the Christmas theme.

The proceedings were opened by the President by thanking those present for their continued support and then passing on to H.E. Mr Muscat, Malta's High Commissioner to 'make a toast' to the Queen of Australia and the President of Malta.

After the main meal, we had a visit from Santa, who gave a present to all children present.

A very nice raffle was also conducted. Besides the three prizes provided by the committee, other members donated other very nice prizes including Christmas Cake, different wines, etc.

By then, the tables were cleared and Desserts were ready.

After 4 O'clock, people started making their way out, all very satisfied with the great joyous atmosphere, good food and friendly company!

A reminder to all our members - Our next event is an Afternoon Tea at the Harmonie Club in Narrabundah on Sunday 4th February at 2pm.

The Committee wishes all our members and friends a Holy Christmas and a Prosperous New Year.

(Photo above) The Committee with Santa at the Christmas Lunch. Connie Grant; Rose Harn; Joe Buhagiar (Treasurer); John Vassallo (President as Santa); Marion Kelly (Secretary) and Liz Micallef.



VICTOR B. CARUANA AND FAMILY (MOSTA) - MALTA

Thank you for keep on sending me the always interesting Australian Newsletter.

I look forward very much to keep on receiving it. I did not receive the Newsletter No 197 from you, but I don't know how, I received it from my cousin Greg Caruana. I hope I will keep on receiving it from you. I wish you and your family and all your readers especially Mosta Maltese Australians A Very Happy Christmas and a Very Good Year 2018. Regards.



ROSEMARY NORTON – ADELAIDE – AUSTRALIA

Thank you for the wonderful newsletter you put together so regularly. On behalf of my parents, Charles and Lora Baldacchino, I would like to wish you and your family, Frank, your e-newsletter team and all your readers a Happy, Holy Christmas and a Blessed New Year in 2018. Rosemary Norton, South Australia

ROY AND JOSEPHINE CASSAR



Wishing you and everyone a Happy and Holy Christmas and New Year 2018



**Greetings from the City of San Francisco, California
on the occasion of the most
beautiful and blessed time of the year.
Christmas in San Francisco**

Louis J. Vella Hon Consul - Republic of Malta in San Francisco USA

San Francisco – one of the most beautiful cities in the world. It goes without saying that during these festive weeks and events connected with Christmas, San Francisco gets all decked out and dressed up to the hilt with lights and decorations in store fronts, parks, houses and in every street and every corner. It is mindboggling where one begins to look. It seems like you keep on seeing one display more beautiful than the one before and the one before that.

San Francisco is of course not the only city that goes all out with mesmerizing decoration during the Christmas holiday season. Many other great cities in the United States and in many other parts of the world are just as magnificent during this time of the year. Malta is not one to be outdone by any city in the world. Maltese have much to be proud of as far as decorations to celebrate and commemorate this special time of the year.

We all know or at least we should all know that lights and decoration have absolutely nothing to do with the significance of the birth of baby Jesus which is what is truly celebrated during the Christmas season. Having said that we also know that without decorations and lights and presents and everything else that so popular this time of year, Christmas will not be the same.

In San Francisco there are many traditions and customs that are unique to the city during Christmas. It would be impossible to talk about all these traditions in such a short message. I will just mention one custom that is not only unique to the city itself but it is very recognizable even though it cannot be replicated anywhere. It is so uniquely San Francisco.



Whoever has visited San Francisco know there is a short section of a street in San Francisco that is famous all over the world. I am referring to a part of Lombard Street that is referred to as the “Crookedest Street” in the world. In a distance of about 120 meters this street which is very steep has not one, not two, but 8 bends or as we call them “hairpin turns” one immediately after the other making you almost dizzy driving down this street. It feels like you are on a roller coaster. These turns are so frequent and there are so many of them that it might as well be a civil engineering wonder, the way they were able to build it almost 100 years ago.

During Christmas this street would be decorated and lit up with all kinds of lights and seasonal mementos. It is truly a site to behold. Somebody had the idea to pack this part of the street with people, one next to the other all of them dressed up as Santa Claus. The effect was truly impressive. I have no doubt that many of the readers know exactly which part of the city I am talking about. It is normally packed with cars going down slowly one after the other to savour the experience. Drivers and passenger are usually smiling or laughing all the way down. Now imagine instead of cars you have these people in big black boots, bulky red suits, red hats and snowy white beards carrying an oversized bag on their back meandering down this crooked street one close to the other. You really have to see it to fully enjoy it. It is truly a site one will never ever forget.

Since we do not have time for more traditions this time, I will simply end this message by wishing everyone on behalf of all Maltese living in the United States of America, a very Merry and Special Christmas full of Joy, Peace and Love and a New Year filled with Good Health and Good Cheer.

From all of us living in the city where the little cable cars climb half way to the stars and the golden sun shines for all.

Four hands piano recital

Pianists Gisèle Grima (left) and Erika Gialanzè

Pianists Gisèle Grima and Erika Gialanzè will be performing a piano recital to celebrate the winter and festive season.

Titled Weihnachtsbaum (Christmas Tree), the duo will perform pieces for four hands, as well as piano solo in a programme of pieces by Franz Liszt, Claude Debussy, Robert Schumann and Pyotr Tchaikovsky.



The concert takes its title directly from Liszt's original work, a varied suite of 12 pieces. Following a short interval, the pianists will then take to the solo stage to perform excerpts from Schumann's Kinderszenen, Op. 15 and Debussy's Footsteps in the Snow and The Snow is Dancing. The concert will come to a close with a selection of pieces arranged for four hands from Tchaikovsky's much-loved Nutcracker Suite, Op. 71.

Grima and Gialanzè have been collaborating since 2013 and have since performed regularly in festivals and concerts around Malta. They have premiered works by Maltese composers and their playing has been described as "elegant, communicative and mutually complementary".



Carols by Candlelights in Gozo

Photo: The Foto Grafer

The Schola Cantorum Jubilate of Xagħra, which is celebrating its 14th anniversary since its foundation, introduced the Australian tradition of Carols by Candlelight in Malta in 2003.

The choir is committed to presenting a Christmas concert with a message. The aim is to help the audience experience the magic of Christmas – that magic which seems to have been somewhat lost in

time. The annual concert focuses on traditional, classical and popular carols or even new compositions or musical arrangements. The repertoire chosen this year comprises works by the composers Rossetti, Gruber, Joubert, Head, Rutter, Yon, Galea and Pace and musical arrangements by Willcocks and Portelli. The choir will be under the direction of Marouska Attard, who will also interpret solo pieces and a duet with Albert Buttigieg. Proceeds from the concert will be forwarded to Dar Ġużeppa Debono, which offers continuous service and support to vulnerable women who face/have faced many challenges.

**GEORGE CROSS FALCONS
COMMUNITY CLUB - NSW**



**SATURDAY
24 MARCH 2018
FROM 2.00PM**

The committee in conjunction with
the Maltese Cultural Association of NSW
presents LUDGIG GALIA
Malta's loved Rock Tenor
and Charles Camilleri - back up singer.
BOOK EARLY - ONLY 150 TICKETS
25-27 Lake Avenue, GRINGILLA - NSW
gcfc@exemail.com.au

\$20 - including light refreshment and coffee

**Thank you for the lovely bulletin. Miliid it-
Tajjeb! John Calleja**

**Best wishes for a Holy Christmas – Mireille
and Bruce Daw (Adelaide)**

Mort Betlem!

Iktar kmieni din is-sena
jien lil Betlem mort inżur,
bhal tarbija jien bdejt nibki
qalbi bil-ferh riedet tfur

Meta imteddejt biex nitlob
fejn twieled Ġesù Bambin
u ġibt jien quddiem għajnejja
x'kien sew gara dak il-hin.

Meta l-Feddej tad-dinja
f'nofs ta' lejl fetah għajnejh,
lil Marija w lil Ġużeppi
mill-ewwel dlonk lemah hdejh!

Kien għar fqajjar fil-kampanja
imsaħhan min-nifs tal-hmara,
u magħha baqra mdaqqa -
ma kienx hemm wisq iktar x'tara.

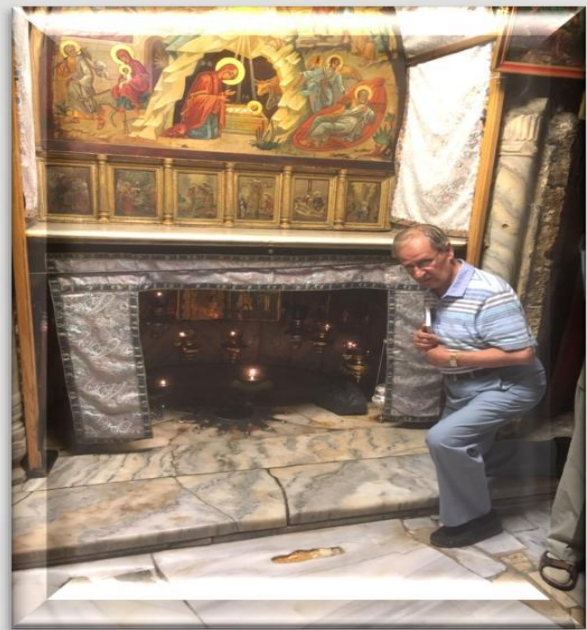
F'hin minnhom is-sema mtela
b'għadd ta' anġli ferrehija
li bil-kant u l-ghana tagħhom
lil-lejl xegħlu bl-aqwa dija.

U l-aħbar dawn bdew ixerrdu
illi twieled il-Bambin,
w ir-ragħajja għassa mal-merhla
lejn il-għar fis bdew mexjin.

Għaddew, tgerbu elfejn sena
mindu sehħ dan it-twelid
izda lilna għadu jsaħhar,
xejn ma jisboq dan il-ġid!

Din il-ġrajja hekk tal-ghageb
għadha mnaqqxa ġewwa l-qlub,
għalkemm snin jigrū w jitgerbu
mhux lakemm minn nofsna ddub!

Alla ried lil Ibnu jibghat
f'din id-dinja tal-bnedmin
biex jifdina u jsalvana
u jarana lkoll henjin!



Issa jmiss il-parti tagħna
li nwieġbu għas-sejha tiegħu,
nobduh b'għajnejna magħluqa
biex nibqgħu fil-merhla miegħu!

Fid-djar tagħkom tinsewx tibnu
il-Presepju bin-nagħgiet,
mithna ddur, ragħajja, l-mistagħgeb
'l hemm u 'l hawn xi żewġ blatiet.

Titilfux, hbieb, in-Novena,
Purċissjoni bil-Bambin,
u l-Priedka minn tat-Tifel
magħżul minn fost iċ-ċkejknin.

B'hekk ikollkom Milied veru
bhal dak li r-ragħajja hassew
meta dahlu f'dak l-għar fqajjar
wara li 'l-anġli obdew!

O Ġesù helwa tarbija,
ejja twieled ġewwa fija:
imla 'l qalbi u lil dari
bl-aqwa w l-isbah armonija.

Kav. Joe M. Attard
2017

**Ninni la tibkix iżjed - Ninni Ġesù Bambin - Hallih għalina l-biki
Għax aħna midinbin. Ejjew, ejjew ja anġli - mis-sema, mija mija
Hdejn Alla li ħalaqkom Bambin ġewwa l-fisqija.**



CHRISTMAS AROUND THE WORLD

Christmas in Australia

Christmas in Australia is often very hot. Whereas the northern hemisphere is in the middle of winter, Australians are baking in summer heat. It is not unusual to have Christmas Day well into the mid 30 degrees Celsius, or near 100 degrees Fahrenheit.

A traditional meal includes a turkey dinner, with ham, and pork. A flaming Christmas plum pudding is added for dessert. In the Australian gold rushes, Christmas puddings often contained a gold nugget. Today a small favor is baked inside. Whoever finds this knows s/he will enjoy good luck. Another treat is Mince Pies.

Some Australians and particularly tourists often have their Christmas dinner at midday on a local beach, Bondi Beach in Sydney's Eastern Suburbs attracts thousands of people on Christmas Day. Other families enjoy their day by having a picnic. If they are at home, the day is punctuated by swimming in a pool, playing Cricket out the backyard, and other outdoor activities.

The warm weather allows Australians to enjoy a tradition which commenced in 1937. **Carols by Candlelight** is held every year on Christmas Eve, where tens of thousands of people gather in the city of Melbourne to sing their favorite Christmas songs. The evening is lit by as many candles singing under a clean cut night sky. The sky with its Southern Cross stars is like a mirror. Sydney and the other capital cities also enjoy Carols in the weeks leading up to Christmas.

Australians surround themselves with **Christmas Bush**, a native plant which has little red flowered leaves. Christmas shopping is often done in shorts and t-shirts. At many beaches Santa Claus arrives on a surfboard, or even on a surf lifesaving boat. Australia's worst Christmas was in 1974, when Cyclone Tracy devastated Darwin in the Northern Territory. More than 60 people were killed.

Christmas in United States of America

Santa Claus was born in US in the 1860's he was named this as he had a white beard and a belly, so he was named Santa Claus as this was the Dutch word for St Nicholas, **Sintaklaas**. Although the Dutch had brought him with them in the 17th century, he did not become an important person at Christmas until the Novelist Washington Irving put him in a novel that he wrote in 1809. This first Santa Claus was still known as St. Nicholas, he did smoke a pipe, and fly around in a wagon without any reindeer, but he did not have his red suit or live at the North Pole, he did however bring presents to children every year.

In 1863 He was given the name Santa Claus and bore the red suit, pipe, and his reindeer and sleigh.

Now Christmas celebrations vary greatly between regions of the United States, because of the variety of nationalities which have settled in it.

In Pennsylvania, the Moravians build a landscape, called a **putz** - under the Christmas tree, while in the same state the Germans are given gifts by Belsnickle, who taps them with his switch if they have misbehaved.

Early European settlers brought many traditions to the United States. Many settled in the early days in the South, these settlers would send Christmas greetings to their distant neighbors by shooting firearms and letting off fireworks. In Hawaii this practice is still in use as under the sunny skies, Santa Claus arrives by boat and Christmas dinner is eaten outdoors.

In Alaska, a star on a pole is taken from door to door, followed by Herod's Men, who try to capture the star. Colonial doorways are often decorated with pineapple, a symbol of hospitality.

In Alaska, boys and girls with lanterns on poles carry a large figure of a star from door to door. They sing carols and are invited in for supper.

In Washington D.C., a huge, spectacular tree with Christmas ornaments is lit ceremoniously when the President presses a button and turns on the tree's lights.

In Boston, carol singing festivities are famous. The singers are accompanied by hand bells.

In New Orleans, a huge ox is paraded around the streets decorated with holly and with ribbons tied to its horns.

In Arizona, the Mexican ritual called **Las Posadas** is kept up. This is a ritual procession and play representing the search of Mary and Joseph for a room at the inn. Families play the parts and visit each other's houses enacting and re-enacting the drama and, at the same time, having a look at each family's crib.

In Hawaii, Christmas starts with the coming of the **Christmas Tree Ship**, which is a ship bringing a great load of Christmas fare. Santa Claus also arrives by boat. In California, Santa Claus sweeps in on a surf board.

Christmas in Canada

Christmas celebrations are quite similar in the variety to America.

In Canada the traditional Christmas dinner is roast turkey with vegetables and sauces. For dessert it is rich, fruity Christmas pudding with brandy sauce. Mince pies, pastry cases filled with a mixture of chopped dried fruit.

In Quebec they display **Crèches** or **nativity scenes** in their homes as the Christmas decorations. After attending midnight mass, families may be served **tourtiere** or pork pie. Another favorite food is **Boulettes** or small meatballs. A Christmas banquet is called a **reveillon**.

Masked mummers are a Christmas tradition from Newfoundland.

In some provinces, a big winter festival, called **Sinck tuck**, is celebrated by the Inuit, with dancing and a present-giving party.

In Labrador, turnips are saved from the summer harvest and are given to children, with a lighted candle pushed into a hollowed out hole.

In Nova Scotia, a country settled by Scottish highlanders, songs and carols brought from Britain two centuries ago are sung each Christmas morning.

Also in Nova Scotia, during the twelve days of Christmas small groups of **belsnicklers**, or **masked mummers**, appear in neighborhoods, ringing bells, making noise, seeking candy or other treats. The hosts may try to guess who the mummers are and if they guess right the mummer removes his or her disguise and stops making rude noises and actions. Children may be quizzed by the mummers on their behavior if they say they have been good they are rewarded with candy. In British Columbia Christmas turkey may be accompanied by either fresh or smoked salmon.

Christmas in Great Britain

In Great Britain the hustle and bustle of the season begins well before Christmas and there is barely anytime for a break until the Twelfth night. There is preparation going on of foods, the sending of Christmas cards, the decorating of houses and churches, and the readying of gifts keep everyone busy even the youngest family members.

On Christmas Eve youngsters hang up their stockings on the ends of the beds or by the chimney so that when Father Christmas comes he can leave them something.

On Christmas morning the family traditionally opens their presents and prepares for a big feast which typically is served just after midday. The table gleams with the best china and glassware, and at every place on the table there is a cracker. The meal begins with a toast, followed by the popping of the crackers. After the meal they sit down in front of the Television for the traditional Christmas speech of the British Monarch.

In the afternoon they exchange visits with neighbors other family members.

Some churches in Great Britain have a Christingle service on the fourth Sunday of Advent. This is a carol service of Scandinavian origin at which every child received an orange and candle wrapped in a red ribbon. The candle represents Jesus and the ribbon stands for the blood of Christ and the love of God embracing the world.

In Britain, children write their letters to Father Christmas and then throw them into the fireplace so they will float up the chimney and fly to the North Pole. If the lists catch fire first, they have to rewrite them.

At Christmas dinner, a plum pudding is served with little treasures hidden inside that bring their finders good luck. Britain was the first country to hang up mistletoe.

Christmas in Greece

St. Nicholas is important in Greece as the patron saint of sailors. According to Greek tradition, his clothes are drenched with brine, his beard drips with seawater, and his face is covered with perspiration because he has been working hard against the waves to reach sinking ships and rescue them from the angry sea. Greek ships never leave port without some sort of St. Nicholas icon on board.

On Christmas Eve small boys to the beating of drums and the tinkling of triangles usually sing carols. They go from house to house and are given dried figs, almonds, walnuts and lots of sweets or sometimes small gifts.

After 40 days of fasting, the Christmas feast is looked forward to with great anticipation by adults and children alike. Pigs are slaughtered and on almost every table are loaves of **christopsomo** or "**Christ Bread**". This bread is made in large sweet loaves of various shapes and the crusts are engraved and decorated in some way that reflects the family's profession.

Christmas trees are not commonly used in Greece. In almost every home the main symbol of the season is a shallow wooden bowl with a piece of wire is suspended across the rim; from that hangs a sprig of basil wrapped around a wooden cross. A small amount of water is kept in the bowl to keep the basil alive and fresh. Once a day, a family member, usually the mother, dips the cross and basil into some holy water and uses it to sprinkle water in each room of the house. This ritual is believed to keep the **Killantzaroi** away from the house.

There is a tradition **kallikantzeri**, where the mischievous goblins appear from the earth during the 12 days of Christmas.

At Christmas very few presents are given to each other. Instead, small gifts are given to hospitals and orphanages.

Priests sometimes go from house to house sprinkling holy water around to get rid of the bad spirits who may be hiding in people's houses.

In most Greek homes an evergreen tree is decorated with tinsel and a star placed on top. Gifts are exchanged on January 1st, **St Basil's Day**.

On Christmas Eve, groups of people gather around the holiday table. Figs, dried on rooftops are served with the spicy golden **Chrisopsomo** bread.

As people are they greet one another by saying **Hronia polla** or many happy years. The table filled with food may include such dishes as **kourambiethes**, a Greek nut cookie.

Christmas in Italy

The Christmas season in Italy goes for three weeks, starting 8 days before Christmas known as the **Novena**. During this period, children go from house to house reciting Christmas poems and singing.

In some parts shepherds bring musical instruments into the villages, play and sing Christmas songs.

In the week before Christmas children go from house to house dressed as shepherds, playing pipes, singing and reciting Christmas poems. They are given money to buy presents.

A strict feast is observed for 24 hours before Christmas Eve, and is followed by a celebration meal, in which a light Milanese cake called **panettone** features as well as chocolate.

Presents and empty boxes, are drawn from the **Urn of Fate** - lucky dip, which always contains one gift per person. By twilight, candles are lighted around the family crib known as the **Presepio**, prayers are said, and children recite poems.

At noon on Christmas Day the pope gives his blessing to crowds gathered in the huge Vatican square.

In Italy the children wait until Epiphany, January 6, for their presents. According to tradition, the presents are delivered by a kind ugly witch called **Befana** on a broomstick. It was said that she was told by the three kings that the baby Jesus was born, she was busy and delayed visiting the baby.

She missed the Star lost her way and has been flying around ever since, leaving presents at every house with children in case he is there. She slides down chimneys, and fills stockings and shoes with good things for good children and it is said leaves coal for children who are not so good. On Christmas Eve the dinner is called **cenone** which is a traditional dish of eel. Christmas lunch is **Tortellini in Brodo** which is filled pasta parcels in broth, also served is **cappone** which is boiled capon, or roasts are served in central Italy. Another famous cake is **pandoro** which originated from Verona.

Christmas in New Zealand

In New Zealand Christmas is combined with summer holidays, so as well as present-buying and parties, families are preparing for trips to the beach. Shops are decorated with Father Christmas in his red cloak and white beard, as well as snow scenes.

The New Zealand traditions of Christmas have mostly come through the English settlers who began arriving there in the late 18th Century. In the last 20 or 30 years the persona of Father Christmas had changed and he is referred to as Santa Claus and has become much more like the Santa of the United States and Ireland. As well people have been forced to change as a result of the Maori culture. The spirits and creatures of the Maori culture resemble the elves and gnomes of European Christmas traditions.

They celebrate the story of the birth of Jesus Christ with a special service, which is appropriate to New Zealanders way of life as they had no motels, and they have many shepherds who take care of their flocks, in doing so they can see the true meaning of Christmas.

In New Zealand the traditional Christmas dinner is roast turkey with vegetables and sauces. For dessert it is rich, fruity Christmas pudding with brandy sauce. Mince pies, pastry cases filled with a mixture of chopped dried fruit



Maltese Christmas “Qaghaq tal-Ghasel” Honey/Treacle Rings

Qaghaq tal-għasel are sweet pastry rings filled with a treacle mixture. Literally translated they are ‘honey rings’; but there is absolutely no honey in the recipe. The main ingredient in the filling is treacle. In Maltese treacle is known as *għasel iswed*; so probably that is why they are known as honey rings. Years ago village people in Malta and Gozo used *qastanija*, and not treacle, for their *qaghaq tal-għasel*. This was made by melting down honeycombs after the honey had been extracted from them. In all probability *qastanija* is a corruption of the Italian *castagna*, which means chestnut. It might be that it was so called because the mixture was the colour of chestnuts. But there are absolutely no chestnuts in the mixture. Through the years *qastanija* was substituted by black treacle. For those who have a very sweet tooth, sugar is added to the filling mixture.

Ingredients:

For the Pastry

500g plain flour
3 egg yolks
50g margarine
water or anisette liqueur

For the filling:

400g of black treacle or golden syrup
400ml water
100g of sugar
180g semolina
the grated rind of a tangerine, lemon and orange
one tablespoonful of aniseeds
one tablespoonful of mixed spice
2 tablespoons cocoa powder
3 tablespoons orange flower water

Method

1. The pastry is made in the same way as the sweet shortcrust pastry.
2. Whilst the pastry is resting, prepare the filling.
3. In a large saucepan put all the ingredients, except for the semolina and slowly bring to the boil. You have to stir all the time.
4. When the mixture boils add the semolina **VERY SLOWLY**, stirring all the time.
5. Bring again to the boil. Cook for a further 5 minutes. It is **VERY IMPORTANT** that you stir all the time; otherwise the semolina will stick to the bottom of the saucepan.
6. Remove from heat and put in a large bowl. When the mixture has cooled cover the bowl with stretch and seal and leave overnight in the fridge.
7. The next day, cut the pastry into eight pieces. Roll out each piece and give it a rectangular shape.
8. Preheat the oven 180°C, Gas Mark 4.
9. Lightly dust a table top with semolina. Take spoonfuls of the filling and curve them *into S shapes* that resemble snakes. *The shapes have to fit the rectangles.*
10. *If you find that the filling is rather sticky, just add more semolina on the table top.*
11. *Place one of the S shapes on each rectangle of pastry. Roll it like a small Swiss roll. Place it cut side down and lightly moisten the ends with water.* Bring the ends together to form a ring. Pinch ends together to seal. With a sharp knife, make a series of decorative slashes on the top.
12. Put pastry rings on a baking tray that has previously been well dusted with semolina.
13. Bake about 15-20 minutes, or till the pastry is a very light beige colour. In the case of these pastry rings, the pastry should never turn a golden brown.





Poinsettias at Christmas

Poinsettia plants are native to Central America, especially an area of southern [Mexico](#) known as 'Taxco del Alarcon' where they flower during the winter. The ancient Aztecs called them 'cuetlaxochitl'. The Aztecs had many uses for them including using the flowers (actually special types of leaves known as bracts rather than being flowers) to make a purple dye for clothes and cosmetics and the milky white sap was made into a medicine to treat fevers. (Today we call the sap latex!)

The poinsettia was made widely known because of a man called Joel Roberts Poinsett (that's why we call them Poinsettia!). He was the first Ambassador from the USA to Mexico in 1825. Poinsett had some greenhouses on his plantations in South Carolina, and while visiting the Taco area in 1828, he became very interested in the plants. He immediately sent some of the plants back to South Carolina, where he began growing the plants and sending them to friends and botanical gardens.

One of the friends he sent plants to was John Bartram of Philadelphia. At the first Philadelphia flower show, Robert Buist, a plants-man from Pennsylvania saw the flower and he was probably the first person to have sold the poinsettias under their botanical, or latin name, name 'Euphorbia pulcherrima' (it means, 'the most beautiful Euphorbia'). They were first sold as cut flowers. It was only in the early 1900s that they were sold as whole plants for landscaping and pot plants. The Ecke family from Southern California were one of, if not, the first to sell them as whole plant and they're still the main producer of the plants in the USA. It is thought that they became known as Poinsettia in the mid 1830s when people found out who had first brought them to America from Mexico.

There is an old Mexican legend about how Poinsettias and Christmas come together, it goes like this:

There was once a poor Mexican girl called Pepita who had no present to give the the baby Jesus at the Christmas Eve Services. As Pepita walked to the chapel, sadly, her cousin Pedro tried to cheer her up. 'Pepita', he said "I'm sure that even the smallest gift, given by someone who loves him will make Jesus Happy."

Pepita didn't know what she could give, so she picked a small handful of weeds from the roadside and made them into a a small bouquet. She felt embarrassed because she could only give this small present to Jesus. As she walked through the chapel to the altar, she remembered what Pedro had said. She began to feel better, knelt down and put the bouquet at the bottom of the nativity scene. Suddenly, the bouquet of weeds burst into bright red flowers, and everyone who saw them were sure they had seen a miracle. From that day on, the bright red flowers were known as the 'Flores de Noche Buena', or 'Flowers of the Holy Night'.

The shape of the poinsettia flower and leaves are sometimes thought as a symbol of the Star of Bethlehem which led the Wise Men to Jesus. The red colored leaves symbolize the blood of Christ. The white leaves represent his purity.

Greg Caruana

**We thank all our readers, correspondents, supporters and friends
Who regularly read and appreciate this journal. If your message
didn't appear in this issue – there is always the next one in 2018.**

Oldest mechanical crib in Malta is 70 years old



Photos: Jonathan Borg

“And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him up in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn” (Luke 2:7).

Nativity scenes have been a popular tradition throughout Advent and Christmas for centuries. Like most things glorious, time-honoured and holy, it originated with a Catholic saint. St Francis of Assisi had a

special devotion to the Child Jesus and he is credited with creating the first Nativity scene on the eve of Christmas 1223.



“I want to do something that will recall the memory of that Child who was born in Bethlehem, to see with bodily eyes the inconveniences of his infancy, how he lay in the manger, and how the ox and ass stood by,” he told St Bonaventure (1221-1274), following Mass inside of a cave in Greccio, Italy.

He later set up an empty manger inside a cave and even included a live ox and donkey beside the manger just as it was believed to have happened on that first Christmas night. He arranged a scene consisting of real people and animals in Greccio, after visiting the birthplace of Jesus in Bethlehem.

His recreation of that first Christmas night was so popular that soon every church in Italy had its own Nativity scene. The devotion also spread to private homes, and in modern times even to secular institutions, so much so that it's now impossible to imagine Christmas without a Nativity scene to behold.

Various people were involved in the setting up of the crib, including Bishop Emmanuel Galea (bottom left), who built the mechanical crib, and his nephew Paul Pavia (bottom right), who provided the mechanical works for the figures. Also seen in the above pictures are Maria Ġużeppina Curmi (top left), founder of the Sisters of Jesus of Nazareth and Mother Theresa Degabriele, during whose time the crib was built.

This perspective inspired the late Bishop Emmanuel Galea who, in 1947, built Malta's first large mechanical crib recreating the Nativity of Jesus Christ at the Institute and orphanage of Jesus of Nazareth in Żejtun. The crib will be open from Sunday, December 17 to Thursday, January 4 from 9.30am till noon and from 4 till 7pm. During this period, there will also be a bazaar open in the adjacent hall.

Christmas Pudding

Christmas puddings take two days to make. On the first day, you mix the ingredients. On the second day, you prepare the basins and steam the puddings. These Ingredients will make one 2lb / 900g pudding or two 1lb / 450g puddings

Ingredients

- 200g Currants, washed
- 200g Sultanas, washed
- 200g Raisins, stoned and chopped
- 100g Mixed Peel, chopped
- 200g Breadcrumbs
- 200g Demerara Sugar
- 200g Shredded Suet
- The finely grated rind and juice of one Lemon
- 100g Almonds
- 200g Plain Flour
- 1/4 teaspoon Salt
- 1 level teaspoon ground Nutmeg
- 1 level teaspoon ground Cinnamon
- 1 level teaspoon Mixed Spice
- 3 eggs
- 275ml of old beer or stout



Method:

Mix the currants, sultanas, raisins and peel together in a large basin. Stir in the breadcrumbs, sugar, suet and lemon rind. Blanch the almonds; to do this by pouring boiling water over the nuts and then leave them to stand for a few minutes. The skins will now come off easily. Chop the almonds fairly finely and add to the fruit.

Sift the flour, salt and spices together. Beat the eggs and add the lemon juice and stout/beer to them. Add the flour and egg mixture to the other ingredients and mix all well together. Leave overnight.

Next day, brush the basin with melted fat and fill with the pudding mixture. Cover the basin with greased greaseproof paper, pleated across the top, and tie firmly with string. Steam the large pudding for at least eight hours, or the smaller ones for six hours.

When the pudding is cold, re-cover it with fresh greaseproof paper, and store it in a cool, dry place. On Christmas Day (or when you want to eat it!) re-heat the pudding exactly the same way, steaming for at least

